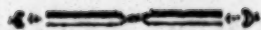


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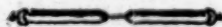
R E M A R K S

ON THE

Rev. JOSEPH BERINGTON'S

EXAMINATION, &c.

ADDRESSED TO THE PUBLIC.



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REMARKS

ON THE

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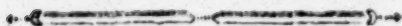
EXAMINATION OF EVENTS

TERMED MIRACULOUS,

AS REPORTED IN

LETTERS FROM ITALY.

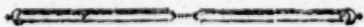
Addressed to the Public.



Wo! to that Man by WHOM scandal comes. — Mat xviii. 7.
If they HEAR not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe, if one shall rise a^g the dead. — Luke xvi. 31.

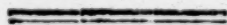


By the Rev. George Bruning.



LONDON:

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M DCC XCVI.



P R E F A C E.

AS many wish for some previous information when an extraordinary subject comes before them, it will not be improper to premise.—The public papers first noticed the prodigies of Italy, but in so ludicrous a shape, as to deserve scarce any attention. Not long after several letters came to hand from that quarter. Their recognised authenticity soon unveiled the first vague reports; and the

well-known respectability of the writers established not only the existence, but the continuance of Miraculous Events. Their singularity, variety, multiplicity and extent have astonished the world, and will make this present year long memorable to posterity. They began at Ancona the 25th of June, at Rome the 9th of July, and extended after to several other parts of Italy.

Whenever God is pleased to speak in signs and wonders, it is not for man to be silent. Accordingly some few of the authentic Letters were presented to the Public first in French; soon after more in an English Edition from the same Press this comes forth. The total silence of public ridicule and obloquy after, implied not a little their merit, at least some weight

weight of conviction or satisfaction. In fact none thought themselves as yet qualified to question facts so unanimously supported. Or if ever so inclinable to step forth; Prudence whispered in the ear—Forbear till something *equal* in weight and authority to *the given* can be produced. But the Rev. Joseph Berington (whom unfortunately, but wrongly, some have supposed to be the Bishop, or Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District) has thought otherwise.----Impatient of delay, and disdainng common forms, he has precipitated himself upon the public by venting ever so much spleen on his fancied absurdity of the events and their relators, without discerning *his own* between at full length.

Had

Had he even chosen the more prudent part by waiting a decent time for every requisite information, it would avail him now much less. Proofs are multiplying around in confirmation of the miraculous events. Not only Italy, but Germany, Spain, England, Scotland, Ireland, &c. have heard thereof, and can show their records. How strangely then has the reverend critical examiner erred in speaking so slightly and pitifully as he has done, on the personal authority of the respectable Canon and formerly Vicar-General of Lyons; whose first and foremost letter on the subject is the most minute and circumspect in every detail beyond all. What then must be its weight after such an accession of testimony and clouds of witnesses to cover it around!

Perhaps

Perhaps the Canon's second letter, received since, may teach a better criticism to *second* thoughts. Among other particulars the Canon states not only the duration of the miracles at Ancona for three months, but their continuation still; and as like to continue, he says to all the incredulous wherever---- Come and see. Who can desire a fairer challenge or experiment? The modern proud philosopher may go there, if he pleases, with the spirit of Saul; but what wonder, if he returns like another Paul! Many, it is well known, of the most profligate there before, have been convinced by what they saw, have done penance and given glory to God.

While such and more to be noticed blessings flow to mankind; can it be a matter of wonder,

wonder, if the letters on the miraculous events are high in request? Such indeed! and so rapid has been the demand, that a third edition was found necessary to gratify the public. Ever so many more letters, and more again might have been added, but the last letter in it was thought equal to many; and as it is the shortest, is only here meant for the benefit of such, who may have seen none hitherto.

Extract

Extract of a Letter from Signore Abbate Luigi Fabi, Keeper of the Decretal Archives, to his Holiness.

Rome, 27th Aug. 1796.

We have had here incessant prayers: and the wonders wrought by the Virgin in her pictures are incontestable, of which several have opened, and moved their eyes. And I have more than once seen it myself in such a manner, that it is impossible for me to be deceived, and with me several thousand persons saw it.

Portrait of a Lady, with a small figure of a child, in the
left corner of the picture, is the
subject.

Painted by J. M. W. Turner.

The subject of the picture is a young lady, with
the wings of an angel, by the Virgin in her
arms, and is unmistakable of which I could
have guessed, and gazed their eyes. And I
have never seen a picture so full of such a
meaning, that it is impossible for me to be de-
ceived, and with me several hundred persons
have seen.

EXAMINATION, &c.

B

practised

practised on mankind. It has heard hitherto but one side of the question. The plaintiff has stood forth forty days, as Goliath: and none to oppose him. But happily in this land, till the whole can be fully stated, or is called for, no judgment can be suffered to pass. If then it can be made plain, that the author, that the man, who knows better, who has taught and been taught better things, that he, I mean, has dealt unfairly with the Public, not in one, but in every material charge adduced; if he, who is the Priest (with tears I utter it) of God, if he has fabricated his own inventions for the most part, and palmed them after on innumerable foreigners of every class, as their own, to traduce them more; if he, who heretofore vilified so much his own brethren at home (witness *his State and Behaviour of English Catholics*); now vilifies far beyond the characters of so many more abroad without cause; if all this comes forth in his writings, there can be no doubt of a happy issue. And you, my worthy countrymen! you who make no distinction of persons, but give equal chance or advantage to every culprit, high
or

or low ; you, whose voice, by judge and jury, inclines to lenity beyond all nations: if thus you deal, not to bear too hard on the worst side; what will you not do on the other to protect the innocent and respectable, when injured here?

Fortunately for the cause I espouse, the subject in question can never be mistaken. It stands perfectly defined in the author's title. It has only to do with the author on one part, and with the credibility of the letter-writers, the reality and nature of the events, so far as related, on the other part. It is to decide if he *alone* is to be believed before all, and in the face of so much respectable, though private, testimony. It excludes of course all, that official intelligence, or sanction from higher authority, may say. In fact none is claimed *as such* here on either side. Matters of fact are never the less true, but equally such, let whatever authority accede or not accede. It may make them more known or certain, but can never give them truth, no more than existence. If then the facts related to have happened in Italy were not real, or

miraculous, as related; or if the letters thereon, as well as their writers, were inadmissible, it was *for him to prove it*. How miserably he has executed his own plan; or deviated from it by recurring to other matter that makes much less for his purpose, remains now *for me to show*.

What then were his resources? It appears by his own confession, that he had none, till he saw in print the *Miraculous Events, established by authentic letters from Italy*. Plain also he neither had nor possibly could have any other from that distant quarter. It is too plain, in fine, that amidst so much sincerity, consistency & piety in the relations, there was something that galled him most sorely. Why else first and all at once does he break out into abuses and scurrilities? It is ever the mark of a weak or bad cause. Why else again, and mostly throughout is the mode of his attack confined to suppositions, surmises and his own bare assertions? Such conduct may impose for a while on the ignorant, but unmasks itself after, and *without arguments* becomes itself answerable for every charge, it
labours

labours so much, but in vain, to fix upon others. For what less do the author's surmises, and accusations imply than a fraud pervading the whole account, and most shamefully kept up? The charge is general in its tendency against all, more or less in some shape or other concurring. From the lowest to the highest not one is spared. But happily all the while not one single proof appears to impugn the existence of the facts; not so much as one single foreign letter is brought forth to counteract the produced, or even a single witness named to overturn the candour, the unanimity and characters of the relators. Had his attempts been directed to any of these points, something of argument might be expected; but as they are not, it will be fair to infer, that the Rev. Mr. Berington either forgot the matter of debate, or durst not face it openly and directly.

So far from it, he renounces the substance for the shadow: he passes off ludicrous conceits for arguments, and for the most part prefers the fertility of his own inventions, on a variety of other extraneous matter to a close

found reasoning on the reality of the fact or on the credibility of the vouchers. A man with his pretensions to knowledge never can be ignorant, that the Public has a right to substantial proofs, when a charge of fraud is preferred; but more especially, when announced *so general*. Why then did he not provide *actual* proofs of the imposture? Why did he not forecast, or delay till some letters, equal at least to the contested in weight and authority, came from abroad? Nothing could be more natural or obvious. Correspondence was equally open, and alike to all. And among his connexions here there are not wanting who actually correspond with Rome;—all ready enough to espouse the above charge could they be as sure *thus* to prove it. Instead of pursuing this line and only satisfactory means, he leads us on further to his own home-spun proofs; and thinks he has done much by telling us in general the eye-sight “is liable to err”—then supposing some few cases, and after assuring us “the sight is peculiarly instructive and comprehensive” all of a sudden pronounces “the sight, of all the
“ senses

"senses, most liable to be deceived." p. 11.
 Such, and no other, my worthy countrymen!
 is the ~~baseless~~ fabric of his vision, on which
 he ~~has~~ have you conclude that ALL the
~~eyes~~ concerned were in some of his
 fancied cases!

Did ever man or christian make such a
 conclusion before? What! will all the en-
 lightened of this age, the zealous lovers of
 experimental philosophy, will they suffer
 greatest and most convincing support to be
 called the weakest? Or are we to doubt of
 the presence of objects and their effects,
 though under immediate inspection? So says
 Mr. Berington, who knows more than all.
 Are not the miracles of Christ, and in parti-
 cular of his resurrection, better attested, and
 more forcibly transmitted to us by eye-wit-
 nesses, than by any other means? Most cer-
 tainly they are. But Mr. Berington argues
 otherwise, and so did the unbelieving Jews.
 More wonderful to find him *reckoning less*
 after on the testimony of the "Theologian
 "Bonomi," because he did not see; less a-
 gain on the "Phlegmatic Robert Smelt,"
 because

because *after resting*, as the former, his firm assent to the miracles wrought in various places on the undoubted veracity of the respectable, he speaks with more modest diffidence on what he saw. What ~~the~~ ^{could} be the "Phlegmatic" Berington! who could declare—"had I been (present) when the "reported prodigies were performed, and "all my senses with the clearest evidence, "had attested their reality, I must have rejected it." p. 27. But on what plea? on the same and no better (as will be shewn), than that on which the Jews denied Christ. These are but a sample of his inconsistencies. Such however is the foundation, on which he thinks to triumph! Such the premises from which he squeezes out this forced conclusion on all: "it is CERTAIN they were deceived." p. 10.

But will this do for the public? By no means. It will reply,—Think not, Sir! we can be duped by mere assertions. An English jury requires something more. To say, that every eye was wrong, and that yours is right, would be to give too much credit to
your

your word. But what can reason do? Deaf to her remonstrance, he rushes on to make a higher charge. They were more and worse than deceived. How many paragraphs are disgraced for this purpose with his foul aspersions! Here at an immense distance his occult science can tell us the thoughts of thousands, their ruling motives and passions—nay, without a single voucher, can decide on their whole conduct better than all vouchers on the spot. Thus begging the question, he declares, "Their devotion, *we may be allowed to think*, was a superstitious veneration." P. 12. "Rather, as the appearance accorded with their wishes, they would encourage the illusion." P. 14. What! his own fancies, and beggarly thoughts to be allowed to stand against positive and the most specific testimony! A child never reasoned worse. Then comes his magic wand to turn the holiest practices of religion, such as repentance, reconciliation, and the most edifying and general returns unto God, like Niniveh, into a mere political farce. What must be the evil of that tongue, which, *like his sole word*, has no mercy,

mercy, but stigmatizes all without distinction.
 “ When processions with their imposing pa-
 “ geantry began, and the ecclesiastical chap-
 “ ters, religious communities, corporations
 “ confraternities, the nobility and the magi-
 “ strates, mixing with the croud, gave their
 “ countenance to the popular belief.” P. 15
 Were I to add the still baser imputations of
 his own creation against them, and in parti-
 cular against the Cardinal Archbishop of An-
 cona, his Vicar-General, and the special wit-
 nesses summoned expressly by their order on
 the solemn occasion, it would be loathsome
 to the more refined and generous minds of
 Britons. Scoffers and libertines, I know
 well, will applaud him, and are never more
 pleased than when the practices of religious
 worship and its teachers are *thus* held forth
 in contempt or derision. The apostate Bi-
 shop of Autun, the iconoclast hand of a Go-
 bet will subscribe to the whole: *thus* they
 taught and practised till religion had no lon-
 ger footing. The French Directory may now
 say; What a pity we had not his counsels
 before! or that he was not the carrier of our

late

late categorical demands on his Holiness, the Pope. His reasonings and oratory would effect more than our victorious arms: he can best assure his Holiness that his subjects have eyes, but do not see; nor understand, that all the late piety of Rome, Ancona, &c. their extraordinary penances and reforms, their outward splendour, and the exteriors of religious worship, are all grimace, mockery, imposture, mummery for the most part, or "an imposing pageantry," and that therefore it would be more becoming to transfer all property, so idly devoted hitherto, rather into the hands of his good and best friend, the French republic.—I do not say, he has made this conclusion: but I can safely affirm that his false assertions or premises lead as much thereunto, as the self same have done most fatally to France and other countries.

Never then can it be thought that the wisdom and accumulating experience of this nation will listen to or suffer a man to impose upon her, whose persuasions and assertions are not only hostile in their tendency to the places of worship and foundations of piety in Italy,

Italy, but to similar or such, as have a fixed establishment here at home. What then will be the opinion of an English jury, if ever Mr. Berington wishes to appeal? It will tell him, if your arbitrary assumptions once pass; if you "may be allowed to think" as you please; if your sole word is to pronounce all the beams to be in the eyes of others, and none in your own; if in fine random assertions are suffered *thus* to treat not only first characters, but whole towns and cities, as dupes or impostors; there is an end of ocular testimony, as well as of all respectable authority: we may reject what ever so many declare in this court, that they have seen; and doubt not only of their sight, but even of our own. If such, and no more is your evidence, it will not suffice to condemn even a dog, much less to stab the innocence of our fellow creatures.—Such will be the ever deserved reproach, when the blind wish to make others like themselves! Such the pit, which the author had prepared for many, but in the end has dug for himself alone!

How

How much more honourable and suitable might it have been to his purpose—if, instead of bewildering himself or others in a dark labyrinth, he had pointed out from the treasures of modern philosophy in what manner similar prodigies to the Italian might be performed naturally here, let us suppose London, without the power of detection, though under the closest and most rigorous examination. It will be doing more than ever yet was done for the public amusement, as well as his own profit. But if, among the more enlightened philosophers of this age, he can name one, who by the more secret powers of art or nature shall cause the present generation of our grand metropolis to leave *all at once* their evil ways and turn to good by the most convincing proofs of repentance and other marks of moral and religious duties; shall make even the most abandoned and profane infidel, the modern Arian, Deist, Atheist, and worse than all, the Jacobin haranguers shut their mouths to iniquity, and (more wonderful than the moving eyes of images) open them now to the glory of God and his saints; shall make

C

streets,

streets, public-houses, and every trade found no less the same; shall in fine exhibit Nimiveh in London by a general reform, equal at least to that of Italy; if Mr. Berinton can find or name such a one to undertake it, he will have, what is more, the heart and benediction of this nation upon him. Such an attempt in *his* philosophy will weigh down more with the curious multitude here, than all his hitherto arguments. But to be serious, does he really think *such* means adequate thereunto? He has *imagined it at least* indeed: he supposes all in Italy to be the effect of mere imagination: denies therefore the need "of a supernatural interposition," and will not "be told of the co-operation of divine grace and other heavenly aids to carry on the work of (her) reformation." P. 23. But till he can realize his own imagination here, or if he declines, when called on, to prove its virtues and blessings among us, will not the world say to him: Your charge of fraud against the innocent cannot stand: you yourself are the impostor!

Little dashed with such consequences, he has but to change his ground and fly to fresh resources. Homer, it is well known, by a happy fiction exalted his heroes at the expence of the Gods. So heretofore this Reverend Author vilified St. Bernard and his miracles, to make his hero Abeillard appear at least the greater. It is highly improper, you will say, in the historic page; but it was to answer the fond purpose. Wonder not then, if now he deals more liberally in jests and taunts; if now he sets his face against the testimony, not of one, or of a few vouchers, but of whole towns and cities, to reason *thus* away the late miraculous events in Italy. They are not indeed on so solid a foundation, as the miracles of St. Bernard (which claim a higher authority in the more venerable opinion of the Church); but too strong for his conceits to overturn. They are stubborn facts; they are related by respectable and well known individuals. Such species therefore of argument cannot hurt but himself. Much less can his stiling the mediums or instruments employed "obviously mean" avail his purpose.

pose. As man or a subject he would not insult the pictures or images of respectable parents or of his king; why then, as a Christian and a Priest of the Lord, will he pass such opprobrious language, or tread more contemptuously on the emblems of any saint, of the blessed Virgin, and of his Saviour? For what can be mean in the hands of God, when used as an instrument of his divine power or grace? "Did not God chuse the illiterate to confound the wise? and the weak to confound the strong? and the contemptible things of this world to destroy the proud therein?" 1 Cor. i. 27. Thus even aprons and handkerchiefs might cure his pride, which, barely applied to the body of St. Paul, healed after so many, I do not pretend to know, like Mr. Berington, the secrets of the Almighty, when, where, or what miracles are improper? But I can safely say—If ever there was a time to confound scoffs and indignities deluged against Christ, his church, and his saints, it is in this self-called enlightened, but indeed more impious age. Nor, with submission, can any means appear better calculated for the

the purpose, than when inanimate creatures, like "the seas and wind, become obedient to "him," and rise up in judgment to condemn, or convince, or convert mankind, before so exalted, now more blind to its good, and like to senseless creatures. Did not Christ in the more obstinate days of Jewish infidelity ordain a more "perfect praise from the lips of "infants?" and added after—"were these "even silent, the very *stones* would proclaim "me." Was it not also to a firm faith, that he promised the power of removing mountains? If then, without any other agent but himself, he is pleased to open and shut the eyes of holy pictures or images; shall Mr. Berington be suffered to call it folly, and shut his own, while vainly attempting to controvert real facts so strongly and repeatedly attested.

And because he knows he cannot elude their pressing weight upon him, he now takes upon himself to assert—Let each fact be ever so well proved, it is "undefined in its object, "and tending to deteriorate, not to improve "the moral character of the human species."

P. 6, 22, 24. Was ever man so situated! Any extremes are better in his eye, than to see the many lights truth in the middle would force upon him! Unable to cope with the reality of the prodigies, he pretends their undefinedness, and imagines their evil tendency. What! is not the Almighty to work any miracle, unless Mr. Berington, or some of his cast can tell us its meaning, or purport? May I here expostulate with him—Is this the philosophy you have imbibed, or taught? Or are these your notions on the ways and designs of divine wisdom and power? Or did you ever dare to broach such from the pulpit? St. Paul bowed down with awe before “the depth of God, his unfearchable ways, and “incomprehensible judgments:” Even Balthazar trembled, though he understood not the meaning of the hand, or of the writing on the wall: and because he understood not, trembled more. Is there no secret monitor, that tells you within? Blush, vain mortal! for such arrogance of opinion; blush to exclude “the finger of God” from the prodigies, merely because you cannot fathom their purport.

purport. Tremble much more for the bolder declaration, you have made, on "their pernicious tendency."

As a priest, you ought to have weighed well your words before, and, as a professed critical reader of the printed MIRACULOUS EVENTS, you ought to have gathered something better from them. Every letter you have read breathes a very different spirit, and quite the reverse to your given declaration. Believe me, Sir! there is a much deeper politician than all, one long trained in the knowledge, as well as the execution of evil, one more versed in the means and tendencies thereunto; who, however he may highly approve of your well known doctrines of opposition and resistance to the lawful powers of that church, you are reputed to follow, will never have to thank you for the *important* discovery of any evil tendency, you vaunt to have made. The devil knows too well the falseness of your allegations, and to his cost. He hates all reconciliations of sinners "under the powerful hand of God," the multiplying fruits of penance and good works, serious amend-

amendments of the depraved and most wicked before, a greater frequentation of the sacraments by humble confessions and devout communions. In a word, he hates whatever is most like in its tendency to withdraw a people, a town or a city from its evil ways after the example of Niniveh. In the result of so much good to Italy, as attested from end to end throughout the letters, and of so much repentance, that never fails of giving joy to God and his angels, was it possible for the mind of Mr. Berington to divine so much evil? or in the midst of so many leading features of piety and virtue, how could he lose sight of the object, as if undefined? or after so many "clouds of witnesses" present and edified on the occasion, how could he dwell so much on the evil tendency of the whole? What then must be the texture of a heart, which is not edified, but even scandalized amidst such moving and general scenes of piety and penance! Such heretofore was that of the obdurate Jews, who only watched the divine words and works of Christ, to misrepresent

present or calumniate him more, nay to blaspheme him after.

Whatever becomes of the head or heart of Mr. Berington, the tenor of his writings and proceedings is no ways unlike. What can be more atrocious than to charge Roman Catholics, with idolatrous worship? and yet he, reputed himself a member of that communion, has done it directly, or indirectly to many. Let us hear his own words. To a stated objection, that Catholics do not address the image itself, but the holy Virgin for her intercession, he replies: "It is a vain subterfuge. With instructed minds it would be so; but not with the populace in the streets of Rome, or in the cathedral of Ancona, who (as Mr. Berington will have it), there is reason to fear, raised their eyes to their images with a veneration, as superstitious, as did the Ephesians to the statues of their Diana." P. 25, 26. Such is the last miserable shift, on which he hopes to rear his further mighty plans. But pray, who has revealed to him the minds and hearts of men? Is it the Almighty? I will acquit him of that presumption.

presumption, Is it the devil? That evil-
 doer has rejected already, as shewn, his hi-
 therto politics. Something better must come
 forth. It is therefore Mr. Berington now
 substitutes his own genuine invention. It is
 first to make men to be, *what he pleases*; then
 to treat, and arraign them, as such, after.
 Thus he treats and arraigns the people
 of Ancona and Rome flocking in their
 streets on the most solemn occasion: he
 calls them the populace, but whom? Not
 only the citizens there in each, but thousands
 and thousands joining with them from all
 parts to do penance and glorify God for the
 wonders wrought visibly before them. As the
 Jews thought once the apostles guilty of drun-
 keness, so he also without why or wherefore
 arraigns these as grossly ignorant, as capable
 of any folly and prone to idolatry. Such
 ideas are all unpardonably in his own eye.
 He knows well religion and divine grace are
 not monopolies confined to the higher classes.
 "God is no acceptor of persons: he scatters
 " (indeed) the proud in the conceit of their
 " heart, and exalts the humble." Why then
 above

above all has Mr. Berington slandered thus the lower state in Italy; where to his certain knowledge the errors of proud philosophers are sure to be denounced and soonest crushed; where of course no evil of public notoriety can escape, as subject to the *more immediate eye* of the holy See? He can never say these people know not, there is but one God. Knowing that, how can they imagine another? If he doubts in the least, let him or any one go, and tell the populace or people of Rome and Ancona (so little instructed, as he imagines)—all your respect for images of the Virgin or Saints is exactly on a par with that of “the Ephesians to their statues of Diana,” ---they will soon convince him of daring folly and impiety. A certain species of travellers tell us, I know, a number of strange stories on this subject; but not one, as yet, will venture to make the above more rational experiment. For if these people look, as he calumniates, on images or pictures, as their Gods; like some idolatrous Jews of old, they will never be ashamed to own them, as such. The experiment is easy; and, if made successfully

fully by some of his friends, well qualified for the purpose, it would be worth all the reams of paper he or any other ever wrote on such matters. Till then, Sir! (the public may justly say) all the calumnies thrown so wantonly on the good people of Italy can have no weight on our eyes, but must cover, as an immoveable beam, your own.

With a little grain of reflection how easily might Mr. Berington have shunned all this weighty and dreadful consequence! It was only to have added---that, if there were any such, as he describes, among the people, they ceased thereby to be members of the Roman Catholic Church. But this, he knew too well, would blunt all his shafts, and defeat every other attack meditated *more* against their guides, the priesthood and holy See, than against the people. As a pastor, once entrusted with the care of souls, but now forbid by his bishop to exercise that charge, he cannot but know, that every pastor is bound to impugn not only every species of idolatry, but its every danger to his flock: to teach, that it is a most detestable crime, and that

con-

consequently he, who yields thereunto, is accursed. He knows all this to be the truth, but lost sight thereof to involve, if possible, both people and clergy in one common mass of guilt. It is for this he trumps forth the efforts of his "enlightened men," such as Leopold and certain temporizing bishops in Tuscany: he tells us their efforts "were opposed by a party interested in the perpetuation of (supposed) abuses (of course the clergy), who excited the people in defence of their favourite relics and pictures."

P. 25. But what was the real truth? It was a mere pretence of abuses, calculated for innovations in religion first, and for sacrilegious avarice and rapine after. Time and a succession of dire events in Brabant, Flanders, &c. under the Imperial Joseph, led on by similar doctrines and principles, have proved it too much, as well as in Tuscany. Even France itself had never lost its religion, but for innovating priests. Why then will he look up so much to *these*, and reward all their opposers even now, that is, the grand body of the catholic church, as a PARTY? It is, be-

D

cause

cause his pride will not permit him, as yet, to stoop to the *formal condemnation* of all their unjustifiable attempts in *that* of the bishop and synod of Pistoia by a well known brief of his Holiness, and issued in 1794. Such a brief unravels all at once the mystery, but was past over, as it bears so much against himself, his doctrines and abettors. The church of God can never want for champions against abuses or errors; but will never recur to such, who mend not their own. If ever he wishes to handle a subject of this nature with more propriety, he need but turn over the Roman Catholic Catechism; or, if he has not one at hand, any child, or old woman, knowing little beyond, will tell him—We pray not to images or statues; we address indeed the saints, but in a very different manner to what we address God. To the former, as his special friends and creatures, we say; *Pray for us*. To the latter, as the giver of all good gifts, we say; *Have mercy on us*. But when thus addressing the saints, it is ever through the merits of Jesus Christ, without which neither our prayers, nor theirs for us can avail.

But

But think not he is willing to rest here. Scoffs and jests were not enough; nor will the charges of superstition or idolatry suffice him: there remains yet the climax of guilt to be charged no less on all directly or indirectly. To introduce it more forcibly this *reverend* scoffer at St. Bernard and his miracles, though baffled ever so much hitherto, has the unparalleled boldness to assert, that to admit the reality of the prodigies, as related, would be
 “to maintain, that the Deity can patronise
 “superstition;” and immediately adds,—
 “had I been at Ancona, or at Rome, when
 “the reported prodigies were performed, and
 “all my senses, with the clearest evidence,
 “had attested their reality, I must have re-
 “jected it—or have subscribed to a blasphem-
 “my.” Can there be a blacker imputation than this against all, who have subscribed to it in heart or hand or equivalently here, elsewhere abroad, and more particularly in so many towns and cities in Italy? But to our and their comfort be it said: our Saviour was more than once charged with blasphemies, and breaches of the divine law by some more

knowing in the law, than their retailer here. Could I expostulate here for his good, it would be to tell him——

“If my enemy had reviled me, I would
 “verily have borne with it. And if he, that
 “hated me, had spoken great things against
 “me, I would perhaps have hid myself from
 “him; but Thou---my Familiar! who” art a
 minister and partaker of one and the same divine
 table “with me;” Ps. liv. 13. why dost thou
 afflict us thus, or strike without cause? What!
 can the Almighty work no miracle, if liable
 to abuse or misrepresentation? Did not God
 work miracles by means of the brazen ser-
 pent erected by his own command? What
 more liable to abuse or misapplication
 than this in the days of more proneness to
 idolatry even among the Jews? So in fact
 through their own perversity it proved. All
 these miracles you are bound to believe; and
 yet according to your principle and “argu-
 “ment, that weighs “so much on your mind,”
 they ought to be rejected, as otherwise it is
 “to maintain, that the Deity can patronize
 “superstition.” Did the apostles cease from
 miracles,

miracles, because mistaken for Gods, by some? Were not all the miracles of Christ and of his cross a stumbling-block of scandal or folly to many. All this he foresaw, yet ceased not from. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are his thoughts, and his ways above ours. What more abused, or misrepresented than the written word of God? and yet will you say---it had better not have been? Did not Christ foresee all the outrages, and indignities to follow, while instituting the sacrifice of the altar---that it would be an object of the greatest scandal, and a handle for many future reformers to declare, that the whole world was thereby throughout several ages drowned in abominable idolatry? Yet not for this did his love cease then to work the greatest of all miracles by giving us himself; nor will ever cease doing in the self same manner by his ministry till time is no more.

It was for this—" The Lord has sworn, " and it shall not repent him" to have fulfilled, as then and only till then, the institution and establishment of a priesthood " for ever

" according to the order of Melchisedeck." Heb. vii. 17, 21. All this you know, Sir! Say then—Are your reasonings on the imputed blasphemy better than the stumbling-blocks of the Jews or Gentiles! Most assuredly they are not. The Church knows best her own marks and bounds: she ever has condemned superstition and idolatry; but needs not you to define one or the other for her. The truth is this—It is your misfortune to set off with false assumptions, and to make worse inferences after. Without proof you suppose the evil tendency of the attested miracles. Your first attempt should be to shew that there is something in the nature of pictures and images of saints to give them an evil tendency. Can you shew any? Impossible. The world knows too well the evil tendency of licentious prints, and obscene pictures; but would blush to imagine with you the same on the portraits of holy persons. If then their express purpose is unto good, can they be unfit instruments, or "so unworthy (as you pretend) of " the great Author of nature?" If of old the simple touch of the bones of a dead man

raised

raised to life the body of another dead man; thrown by chance into the sepulchre of Elizabeth; if even the shadow of a man could heal in an instant all coming thereunto, as in the case of St. Peter; shall not God, if he pleases, when he pleases, and for whatever end he pleases, shall not he command the eyes of holy pictures and images to move? Is it for you to tell us—it is highly improper or unworthy of him? or are you “hardy enough” to maintain *before him*, that, if done, its whole tendency would be to “patronise superstition.” So you aver in direct terms: I record them with horror---“It is not possible to evade the evidence of this inference.” p. 27. Repentance only can efface the hand-writing against you.

It is in vain that you screen yourself under image-worship or its supposed abuses, it is but deceiving yourself or others to dwell thereon. You chuse not to define either, or to separate one from the other. It would unhinge your whole plan. Had you given us a marked distinction between what is holy and its abuse, between the allowed respect to holy images

images or pictures and a superstitious misapplication thereof, between the sanction God has given, and that, which he can never give; you must have spoken the language of your injured Mother, the Church, all which, more especially in the days of the Iconoclasts, and since, she has most clearly defined. These sources of better information you withheld from the Public, and why?—but to throw more dust in their eyes, and to make them swallow all the calumnies scattered in your writings. Without such arts your many insinuations, or assertions, or imputations of fraud, of hypocrisy, of superstition, of idolatry and blasphemy, against all descriptions and worthiest of persons, could never have made their appearance.

If now I have said too much to him or on him, let the Public judge from the sequel. After asserting the Pope “with-holding his
“own presence from [the scene of prodigies,
“and not willing to behold”; after stating
—he “only feeds the public enthusiasm by
“directing sermons to be [preached in
“this he acts with wisdom, still encouraging
“a be-

" a belief, that tends to animate the people,"
 The author adds—" I impute no unworthy
 " views to Pius VI. . . . and if while his sub-
 " jects are deranged, he makes use of their
 " folly to effect their greater good, he must be
 " absolved in the severest school of casuistry,
 " while that of political prudence will ap-
 " plaud him." p. 21. It demands all our
 patience to put up with such bare-faced false-
 hoods or absurdities from Mr. Berington.
He knows all the while he cannot produce a
 single record here on the Pope, excepting *on-*
ly his ordering " the sermons and proces-
 " sions." But who can endure his horrid
 medley of casuistry and policy? Was ever a
 Machiavel more detestable? By pretending
 to " impute no unworthy views to Pius VI,"
 Mr. Berington may possibly think to save
 some appearance of moderation, to shew some
 mercy at least for one. But under its false
 garb it will soon appear, he vents more and
 worse against *one*, than against all; and, like
 the snake in the grass, levels a most deadly
 stroke at his Holiness. All the author has ad-
 vanced, or asserted hitherto will soon prove
 it

it to you. I have only to put a few questions to him.

Have you not already Sir ! charged whatever else is most respectable in Rome and elsewhere, directly or indirectly, with fraud, superstition, idolatry and blasphemy ? Now can all this public and general tendency thereunto be hidden, or unknown to his Holiness ? It is not in the nature of human reason to form the surmise : and impossible for him, who is ever the eye and guide of all. Even your own account pre-supposes a knowledge of all the leading circumstances. You praise his " wisdom", which " only feeds the " public enthusiasm." You extol his " still " encouraging a belief that tends to animate " the people : " You hold him forth as a first rate politician for " availing himself of their " convictions," and because " he makes use of " their folly ! " And can all this be done without making the common Father of the Faithful more guilty than all ? Can he thus countenance your alledged fraud, superstition, idolatry and blasphemy ? Can he pass all off for mere "*folly*", as you do ? You know well
Sir !

Sir! there are nine ways of participation in the guilt of others; what then must be the abyss of his enormities by your *own* statement! If every pastor and every bishop is bound to oppose rising errors and evil practices: how much more is his Holiness bound thereunto; and especially when the errors and vices, you describe, are so public, so extensive and enormous? And yet your "severest school of modern casuistry", your "political prudence" not only hold him "absolved", but "will applaud him.". But if such is your *hug* of applause or special fancied mercy to him; what must be the gripe of your enmity to all besides! Often have I read or heard of Berington *versus* Berington, more especially in the publications of the Rev. Messrs. Plowden and Milner, but never till now was there an instance beyond THIS in its magnitude or consequence. Even France itself can never say worse things of his Holiness. All orders, ranks and descriptions of persons blush here for you: how much better, when you can do as much for yourself! Never Sir! never can you extricate yourself from such a mire of
 contra-

contradiction and false imputations, till you declare to the world—The whole charge was my own invention: and, as I set forth with wrong principles and false assertions at first, I was hard driven to support them by more after.—Nor imagine any repentance will do before God, if you are unwilling to retract before man. The call is pressing; and you stand arraigned before both.

But what hopes can the aggrieved Public, the good and worthy, form of such a retraction; when it is well known, that all along, even to this day, and in spite of all the severe warnings of anarchy before him, he is flying in the face of his own bishop; nor only of him, but in that of Pius VI. Long since has the supreme acknowledged Head and Pastor of all spoken to his flock by brief, as noticed before, or made known his further will by repeated and sanctioned letters here, but in vain to Mr. Berington. He is unwilling to hear the voice of the appointed shepherd, because he is unwilling to renounce the doctrines, he has taught, so adverse to the above. Such is the man, who has stepped forth at various

rious times to mislead not only his own brethren, but still more the Public on the present occasion! Such the man, whom no community, no establishment, religious or political, will or can trust in their first concerns, while thus or equivalently determined to act in opposition to their principles! Such in fine is the man, who announces to you his coming forth in a new shape with his *History of the Rise, the Progress and the Decline of the Papal power*! By the many specimens now before you of abuse, of falsehood and calumny, and to be met with in nearly all his former publications, you may easily guess, that the same arts and inventions, he has practised so unsuccessfully hitherto on the public mind, will be obtruded not less in his future. If therein he dwells on *earthly power*; he will dwell on nothing to the purpose. But if he confines himself to the only proper question on *Divine Power*, as committed to one and to be continued to one; not he or the whole world can overturn an atom of it. A deeper politician than either has been long at it these eighteen hundred years nearly, but in vain.

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As such the Divine Word has marked him out repeatedly to all. He may bark, he may roar mightily, *as at present*, but no more than Mr. Berington, can he prevail against the Church or its Rock, as established by Christ. The Arch-fiend never proved himself such a bungler, as Mr. Berington. It was reserved for the latter to applaud his Holiness's wisdom and conduct, and to stab it at the same time. Lo! also again, and with the same breath, he is ready to declare war and enmity against Pius VI. *even* while assuring the world, he (the Pope) has "no unworthy views", but the "greater good of his subjects", and has nothing so much in view, as "to draw them on to a reform of life, and to the practice of religious duties." Such is the mighty plan of the author to lead astray, if possible, my worthy countrymen! It is to appear in five volumes: but can all the volumes of the world do away his past and present contradictions?

It will be of little account now to notice his scattered incidentals, such as "the imprudence of the editors"—suspicions with respect to the translators—all in his own eye—
"apathy

"apathy of his Holiness," while *every given record* expresses his joy at first, and implies it more after from the whole tenor of his conduct on the occasion—or that he "did not see" or would not see the prodigies".—These bare assertions require no further notice.

But how can I pass over his base calumny on the French Jesuits, and still baser misrepresentation of *ONE* "of their society, who "died at Toulouse" about the time Italy re-founded with the miracles of Labre. The death of both, as well as their lives, breathed the odour of sanctity. The citizens and parliament of Toulouse have left everlasting records for the former. Such was their joint respect for his holy remains, their earnest wish to retain his body in the Church, that their own act, prohibiting burial there, was reversed by a special decree in *his* favour. He is well known among them under the name of Father Sérane. As for his being a Thaumaturgus, or even worker of any miracles *that* only exists in the head of Mr. Berington; who may sit down assured of the above particulars, as I am authorised to state them

by an intimate and respectable acquaintance of Sérane. Who, but this son of Voltaire, could have hatched his own counterfeit miracles for the above holy person; and *expressly* to combat and overturn the *real* miracles of another? Much less can I pass over the contemptuous treatment this rich man in his own conceit, has thrown on the holy Lazarus of this century, I mean, the Venerable Labre, whose *life the senseless esteemed as folly and his end without honour, but whose lot is with the saints*, as God was pleased to honour him with ever so many attested miracles at Rome and elsewhere after his death. Italy saw, rejoiced to see, and owned the hand of God no less then, than in 1796. It is now the fifteenth year since the public testimony of Italy, on the miracles of the Venerable Labre came forth, and still subsists unshaken. To destroy the whole weight of her testimony at once, behold his hear-say or abler invention makes out, as Voltaire would have done, a ridiculous account of Labre "in the process of his " canonization;" and to support it the better, appeals in a very deceitful manner to a
most

most respectable character. Had the author given us the well known answers during the process, he would blush at his own ridicule, that has no other ground but his own base misrepresentation. The real account, so far from injuring, does the highest honor to Labre.

To conclude now on the whole—Can any one living imagine, or will posterity believe, that Mr. Berington has the assurance to tell the world, that whatever he has written or said on the subject from end to end was for the cause of God and of his Church. It is a declaration given under his own hand, more than once. But a hand—that ought to have withered, while offering *such incense* at the throne of the All-seeing Majesty of God. In what manner executed you have read, or heard with horror. Thus Herod talked of going to adore the Infant, but it was to kill him; thus Judas advanced to kiss his Lord and Master, but it was to betray him; thus, in fine, the Pharisees “came in sheeps cloathing, but were within ravenous wolves”. So also are the *pious* motives of this imposing writer found to go forth seeking whom to de-

your among you: such no less, ^{as} shewn, were the hugs of applause or kisses of peace tendered by him to his Holiness: in a word, if we may judge of *a tree by its fruits*, to defend the cause of God and religion was with him to disguise or stab it. But what need have we of parallel cases or of further witnesses?

What remains but to leave the final decision on the whole to my worthy countrymen? It was therefore I addressed you. And, if the innocent are to be protected, if evil and deceit are to be repelled or punished, what other can your decision be, than—Let every false charge, Mr. Berington! be on thy own head! and, as we “may with confidence pronounce” all thy proceedings against the innocent to be “obviously mean”—thy statements mostly “undefined” to puzzle or deceive the more;—thy whole plan “tending to deteriorate, not to improve the moral character of the human species,” to blacken more than to exalt religion and its ministry; since such thy guilt—canst thou expect lenity or mercy at our hands? Or can it be a wonder to hear the appointed Judge saying unto thee,

thee, as in the case of the unfaithful servant,
before God and man—"Ex ore tuo te judi-
co, Serve Nequam!" It is from thine own
mouth, Wicked Servant! that I condemn
thee.

Milton, Berks,

Dec. 2, 1796.



